



IS THE PERSON WITHOUT A HOME MY NEIGHBOR?

Engaging our urban surroundings in Washington, DC continues at the new Wesley Theological Seminary Mount Vernon Square location. A partnership between Wesley Theological Seminary, Asbury United Methodist Church, and Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church, Wesley @ Mount Vernon Square houses our Urban Ministry program, Wesley's intentional community, the Birch Residence Hall, faculty offices and classroom space.

For the past year, Mount Vernon Square (MVS) has been hosting workshops dedicated to assisting congregations in their effort to address the demands created by the changing demographics of their communities and the gospel mandate to reach all people. The series, entitled "Who Is My Neighbor?" broke for summer recess with the program "Is the Person without a Home My Neighbor?" led by Wesley's Professor of Historical Theology, Dr. Beverly Mitchell. Members of both the Wesley community and local churches joined to learn how to better support, love, and care for unhoused neighbors.

The workshop began with a devotion on the story of the Good Samaritan. Dr. Mitchell urged each participant to think about what it meant for the Samaritan to touch this wounded man and the generosity, love, and care the Samaritan showed to someone in need. Connecting the parable with personal examples and stories, she encouraged individuals and churches to make a difference in the lives of the unhoused.

Participants learned about three support avenues to address homelessness: public agencies, social workers, and churches. While some of the support avenue functions overlap, churches can support unhoused neighbors in a variety of ways. One model asks churches to partner with an unhoused family. Through the many gifts and networks within a church community, members can help in job readiness training, by providing food and clothing, or by simply being a friend to an unhoused neighbor.

In the second half of the workshop, participants were treated to a conversation with Thella Jacobs, a Lay Leader at Rising Hope Mission Church, who shared her story of hope. Ms. Jacobs, after losing her job, became homeless and lived in a shelter. While at the shelter she led a Bible Study and met Pastor Keary Kincannon (M.Div. '81) and others at Rising Hope. She eventually gained employment, now has her own apartment, and is in leadership at Rising Hope Mission Church. She encouraged participants to show love to unhoused neighbors and to find ways to support those in need.

A DVD of the workshop proceedings is available by emailing fmudd@wesleyseminary.edu.

The "Who Is My Neighbor?" series invites both lay and clergy to be stimulated by a presentation and then participate in peer learning discussions to ask questions, voice concerns, get new ideas and strategies, and make plans for the future. The Fall workshops include: "Is the Democrat/Republican My Neighbor?" on Saturday, October 1, 2011, with Dr. Shaun Casey, Professor of Christian Ethics, and "Is the Immigrant My Neighbor?" on Saturday, November 5, 2011, with Allison Rutland Soulen, Director of Legal Services, and Rob Rutland-Brown, Executive Director, Just Neighbors.



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